

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 11188

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR AS VN VS
SUBJ: DRV COLD-SHOULDERS GOA GESTURE TOWARD "PRG"

REF: CANBERRA 5010

SUMMARY: DRV CHARGE TOLD DFA DEP SECY WOOLCOTT ON AUG 2 THAT, DESPITE GOA'S APPROVAL "PRG" PARTICIPATION AS NON-GOVT IN ICRC WEAPONS CONFERENCE, AUSTRALIAN STANCE TOWARD "PRG" LESS THAN SATISFACTORY AND POSED OBSTACLE TO DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS (I.E. ACCREDITATION OF GOA AMBASSADOR TO HANOI). AUSTRALIAN EMBOFFS HERE FEEL DFA INCREASINGLY IRRITATED OVER DRV'S BEHAVIOR AND, UNLESS HANOI ABANDONS ITS OBSTINACY, THAT DFA WILL TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE, OR EVEN ELIMINATE, AUSTRALIAN MISSION IN DRV IN A COUPLE OF MONTHS. END SUMMARY.

1. AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF(PROTECT ABSOLUTELY) AUG 23 SHOWED US IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE PORTION OF AUG 2 MEMCON BETWEEN DEP SECY WOOLCOTT AND DRV CHARGE NGUYEN DY NIEN DEALING WITH GOA ATTITUDE TOWARD "PRG". NIEN WAS APPARENTLY CALLED IN TO HEAR EXPLANATION OF GOA'S DECISION TO APPROVE "PRG" ATTENDANCE AT ICRC WEAPONS CONFERENCE AS NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY. GOA DECISION EXPLAINED PUBLICLY BY FONMIN WILLESEE PREVIOUS DAY (REFTEL).

2. NIEN WAS OBVIOUSLY PREPARED FOR THE AUSTRALIAN PRESENTATION, TREATING WHAT THE GOA EVIDENTLY VIEWED AS CONCESSION TO DRV AS INSIGNIFICANT. WHILE DRV UNDERSTOOD GOA'S DESIRE TO SEND
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AMB TO HANOI, NIEN SAID, "THE LESS THAN SATISFACTORY NATURE

OF AUSTRALIA'S STANCE TOWARD 'PRG' COULD CREATE DIFFICULTIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES." GOA'S JULY RESPONSE REPRESENTED "AN ADVANCE" OVER ITS NEGATIVE VOTE AT THE FEBRUARY DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE BUT, NIEN CONTINUED, AUSTRALIAN STANCE STILL "DID NOT REALLY REFLECT REALITIES OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIET-NAM" AND GOA UNWILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE "PRG" WAS "HANDICAP" TO BETTER RELATIONS WITH HANOI.

3. DRV ENVOY THEN ASKED WHETHER GOA VOTE AT FEBRUARY CONFAB HAD BEEN AT DFA INSTRUCTION OR DELEGATION'S INITIATIVE. WOOLCOTT REPLIED THAT "THE LATTER ASSUMPTION WAS MORE PRECISE" AND THAT DECISION TO VOTE "NO" WAS BASED ON "RATHER RESTRICTIVE JUDGEMENT" (MEANING, PRESUMABLY, THAT GAO DEL TOO RIGID IDEOLOGICALLY). NIEN THEN REITERATED, AND WOOLCOTT REJECTED, DRV CONTENTION THAT NON-RECOGNITION OF "PRG" CONFLICTED WITH PARIS AGREEMENT. WOOLCOTT TOLD NIEN THAT GOA COULD NOT RECOGNIZE "PRG" FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, AMONG THEM "DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS" (SIC).

4. FEELING AMONG AUSTRALIAN EMBOFFS HERE IS THAT CANBERRA INCREASINGLY IRRITATED BY DRV OBSTINACY AND IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING DROPPING PLANS TO ACCREDIT AMB TO HANOI OR EVEN TO CLOSE ITS MISSION THERE ENTIRELY.
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